

Equity and Excellence: Political Forces in the Education of Gifted Students In The United States and Abroad

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Abstract

Divisive rhetoric and heated political discourse surround the identification and education of gifted students and lead to opposing philosophical issues of egalitarianism versus elitism. Researchers have long chronicled the ambivalence in the United States over the concepts of giftedness and intellectual talent (Benbow & Stanley, 1996; see also Gallagher & Weiss, 1979).

Gallagher (2005) suggested that the two predominant social values reflected in American education are equity and excellence: “The dual and desirable educational goals of student *equity* and student *excellence* have often been in a serious struggle for scarce resources. Student equity ensures all students a fair shot at a good education. Student excellence promises every student the right to achieve as far and as high as he or she is capable. Because the problems of equity have greater immediacy than does the long-term enhancement of excellence, this struggle has often been won by equity.” (Gallagher, 2005, p. 32). The ebbs and flows of public perceptions of equity and excellence and political and historical events have significantly impacted the evolution of the field of gifted education in the United States and abroad. In order to understand these influences on the respective “outlier” student, it’s important to consider the context of the country, significant events, overall educational reform efforts and the implications on the education of gifted students. This article provides a backdrop of the United States’ ambivalence towards gifted education as well as provides an overview of a sample of countries as frames of reference. Implications for policy and practice are discussed.

Keywords

Gifted education, politics of gifted education, international gifted education, equity and excellence

Introduction

The ebb and flow of public perception of equity and excellence, and political and historical events, have significantly impacted the evolution of the field of gifted education in the United

States and abroad. To understand these influences on the respective “outlier” student, it

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influences on the respective “outlier” student, it is important to consider the context of the country, significant events, overall educational reform efforts, and implications for the education of gifted students. This article provides an explanation for the United States’ ambivalence towards gifted education, and provides an overview of gifted education in four countries as a frame of reference. The countries selected are South Korea, Singapore, England and Finland. The criteria for selecting these countries included elements such as geographical spread, international test comparisons of top students, explicit programming or mandates for educating gifted students or the opposite. Additional criteria included population size and gross domestic product as influences on educating gifted students. Lastly, public perception regarding serving a country’s brightest students provides context and an additional element for comparison.

Methodology

The methodology employed was a comparative analysis of five countries (N=5). It is qualitative in nature because educational systems are contextually bound and socially constructed. The researchers had no formal hypothesis in mind, other than literature findings about the relationship among policy (educational reform), public perception, and the degree to which programming for gifted and talented students is formalized (Finn & Wright, 2015; National Association of Gifted Children, 2016; Spielhagen & Brown, 2008). The researchers visited websites, reviewed laws and policies governing gifted education, and in one case, spoke with an international government official charged with overseeing a country’s gifted education program. Finally, consideration was given to countries representing different populations sizes, geographical and gross domestic product (GDP) diversity, and history of educational reform efforts focused on equity or excellence.

Gifted Education in the United States

With a population of approximately 324 million, the United States is home to diverse ethnic groups and is the third most populous country in the world. Americans identify themselves as 62.6% White, 15% Hispanic, 13% Black, 4.4% Asian, with the remainder being American and Alaska native, Hawaiian or other Pacific islander or two or more races. In 2015, the GDP per capita was \$56,300. Education is the largest expense in every state budget. Beyond state education expenditures, the federal government spent a total of \$3.7 trillion in fiscal year 2015 with approximately \$154 billion in education spending accounting for 4.2 percent of the entire federal budget according to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2017). The Javits Act, passed in 1988, is the only federal program dedicated specifically to gifted and talented students, but it does not fund local gifted education programs (Civic Impulse, 2017). Rather, Javits funds research and demonstration projects through a competitive grant process. Approximately 3.5 million dollars was allocated in 2015 to fund 11 Javits grants, representing less than .01% of federal discretionary funding. Javits monies, distributed as research grants, are earmarked for research demonstration projects that target traditionally under-represented populations in gifted education. One of the key priorities of Javits funding is to reduce the achievement gap for students at the highest academic levels. *The Excellence Gap* (Plucker, Burroughs, & Song, 2010) suggested that an achievement gap exists representing differences between subgroups of students performing at the highest levels of achievement on state and national measures.

Gallagher (2005) suggested that the two predominant social values reflected in American education are equity and excellence: “The dual and desirable educational goals of student *equity* and student *excellence* have often been in a

serious struggle for scarce resources. Student equity ensures all students a fair shot at a good education. Student excellence promises every student the right to achieve as far and as high as he or she is capable. Because the problems of equity have greater immediacy than does the long-term enhancement of excellence, this struggle has often been won by equity,” (Gallagher, 2005, p. 32). Even the term *gifted* is value-laden, and, in some school districts is not allowed to be used. Confusion over which students to include in the definition of gifted students confounds the problem. Harking back to the earliest of researchers on the topic (e.g., Hollingworth, 1926; Terman, 1925), giftedness was commonly defined as raw intellectual power or simply IQ. The term giftedness was synonymous with “intellectual giftedness,” and the pioneering researchers investigated the nature and characteristics of gifted individuals only *after* setting minimal IQ standards for identification. As the field evolved, a sense of elitism and limited access to programming and resources became associated with giftedness and those who were admitted into the “intellectual club” on the basis of their performance on the Stanford-Binet or Wechsler Scales. Due, at least in part, to this perception of elitism, as well as to a social push to include more diverse students into programs for the gifted, the field began to consider alternative methods and procedures for identifying gifted students and for broadening ways in which gifted students are served. Yet, even today, programs for gifted students are frequently under-funded because state and federal mandates often lack provisions to provide appropriate services for those who learn faster than their age-mates (National Association of Gifted Children, 2016). Moreover, no coherent or systematic body of empirical research on policies or classroom practices for gifted learners has emerged. For example, despite seventy years of research on the benefits of acceleration, no consistent policy on acceleration exists across the states or, more

importantly, systematically implemented in schools (Colangelo, Assouline, & Gross, 2004). Gallagher (2004) warned about policy initiatives that attempt to improve education by targeting achievement gaps, specifically citing the “impressive” unintended but negative consequences of *No Child Left Behind* for students of exceptional ability because of the law’s focus on bringing students up to levels deemed proficient by state standards, without consideration of students who were beyond proficient.

In recent years, the needs of students who must be brought *up to standard* have been so politicized that the concept of *exceptionality* has come to exclude the exceptional needs of the highly able student. Mandated minimum competency testing has created ceiling effects for highly able students, while states provide little or no off-level testing to determine appropriate educational experiences for those who already meet the standards. However, parents and educators seeking to address the needs of highly able students face charges of elitism from beleaguered educational administrators and policymakers.

To complicate the matter, where gifted education resides at the state level dictates the funding stream as well as subsequent guidelines and procedures for schools in individual states. A recent State of the States Report (National Association of Gifted Children, 2016) revealed that there has always been a lack of coherence and consistency in the location of gifted services at the state level. Is gifted education more akin to special education or general education? Lacking a satisfactory answer to this question, gifted educators face a professional identity crisis and lack of influence in the educational arena, at large.

The tension of equity versus excellence has defined gifted education in the United States for over two centuries. The need to discuss equity and excellence within the context of the United States and other countries is warranted because

educational reform efforts are intrinsically and explicitly linked to government initiatives, policies, and public perception. Leveraging educational reforms for a specific population of students, such as gifted students, in order to provide parity with reform efforts, perceptions, or government initiatives for other groups of students, such as those with special needs and is at the minimum, a challenge; and at the maximum something that may never be achieved in the United States because providing resources or services for gifted students is perceived as elitist (Finn & Hockett, 2012).

Even a few researchers outside of the field of gifted education have become proponents of gifted education, citing the nation's rhetoric toward equity as a failure of the country to value its human capital. An incendiary report from the Thomas B. Fordham Institute (Theaker, et al, 2011) brought into sharp focus the decline in achievement among the top students in the United States, those with the potential and demonstrated capacity to excel in school and assume leadership roles in the United States and the global community. This report suggested that the United States' brightest students are the unintended victims of the lofty goals of *No Child Left Behind*. They are not making the much heralded "adequate yearly progress" that is supposed to characterize school success, but instead are losing ground when their performance is tracked over time.

Chester Finn, President of the Thomas B. Fordham Institute stated that as a country, Americans all lose by focusing on who is gifted rather than on what we can do to nurture intellectual potential: "Collateral victims are a society and economy that thereby fail to make the most of this latent human capital." Finn (2013) stated further that, "It's not elitist to pour more resources into educating our brightest kids. In fact, the future of the country may depend on it," (Finn, 2013, pg. 1). He posited seven explanations as to why education leaders

and philanthropists fail to take an interest in gifted students. In brief, they are as follows:

- The country's nervousness about elitism.
- A widespread belief that "equity" should be solely about income, minority status, handicapping conditions, and historical disenfranchisement.
- A mistaken belief that high-ability youngsters will do fine, even if the education system makes no special provision for them.
- The definition of "gifted" itself has been ill-defined.
- The field of gifted education lacks convincing research as to what works.
- Whether due to elitism, angst, or a shortage of resources, the gifted education world has been meek when it comes to lobbying and special pleading.
- The wishful proposition that "differentiated instruction" would magically enable every teacher to succeed with every child in a mixed classroom. (Finn & Hockett, 2012).

The United States must be concerned with its future workforce in order to ensure its long-term competitiveness, security and innovation (Finn & Wright, 2015), and paying attention to what we do with our brightest students and what other countries do with their brightest students, matters (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2014). The United States must ask not only how it is doing relative to gifted education, but given the interdependence of all countries and the global economy, it must consider how other countries fare with their brightest. The U.S. produces a much smaller proportion of advanced students, according to the Trends in Math and Science Study (TIMSS, 2015), than our economic competitors (Plucker, 2016).

Table I displays a sample of countries, their population, Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita, and national or federal efforts that

support or impede gifted education. GDP is included in the chart because economists Hanushek and Woessmann (2015) estimate that a “ten percentage point increase in the share of

top-performing students” within a country “is associated with 1.3 percentage point higher annual growth” of that country’s economy.

Table I: Sample countries; their populations, GDP per capita, and federal initiatives regarding gifted education

Country	Population	GDP per capita	Funding, Regulations, or Federal Efforts in Gifted Education
United States	324 million	\$56,300	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3.5 million for Javits grants • No federal universally adopted definition • No federal mandate to identify or serve • Gifted education is not funded • National advocacy efforts
S. Korea	49 million	\$36,700	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gifted Education Promotion Law (2002) • Master Plan jointly developed by several government agencies (2008)
Singapore	5.7 million	\$85,700	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Universal screening to all 3rd graders • 1% of the population is offered seats in 9 of the country’s Gifted Education Program (GEP) programs/schools • The Singaporean government sees their gifted students as a national resource in the political and economic stability of the nation (Ministry of Education, 2016)
England	51 million	\$46,300	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No national mandate to identify and serve gifted students • Historical political skittishness about gifted education as a way to segregate through social classes • Schools are encouraged in their self-review and planning to include provisions for identifying and servicing able gifted pupils • National advocacy efforts
Finland	5.48 million	\$41,200	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seen internationally as a “model” in education • Equality focus in education; all children, regardless of background, should generally be educated the same • The focus in education is on learning rather than testing • Teachers are highly regarded, given huge latitude, trusted to do what’s in the best interests of students, and hold Masters degree or beyond

Beyond Our Borders

The next section highlights several countries and the degree to which they support or impede progress in gifted education, by considering the rules and regulations governing the education of the country's brightest students. The selected countries, South Korea, Singapore, England and Finland, were chosen to illuminate the diverse ways of responding to gifted learners from disparate areas around the world.

Gifted Education in South Korea

South Korea is located in the southern half of the Korean Peninsula in Eastern Asia. The educational research organization, the Korean Educational Development Institute (KEDI) makes it clear that South Korean society values and emphasizes educational achievement, particularly in the areas of math and science, subjects that constitute approximately 95% of the country's gifted programs (Korean Educational Development Institute, 2011). Competition amongst students – and their families – is fierce, as parents make significant financial sacrifices to ensure that their child is well prepared for high-stakes high school and college entrance exams. On average, South Korean parents spend approximately \$1,000 a month on supplemental education, including weekend and after-school classes and private tutors (Finn & Wright, 2015).

South Korea has made strides in its recent effort to identify and educate gifted learners, particularly in areas deemed valuable to the nation's future, (Korean Educational Development Institute, 2011). On January 28, 2000, gifted education came to the forefront of a national discussion of the state of the country's educational policy with the enactment of the *Gifted Education Promotion Law*. The law, which went into effect in 2002, to build a firm foundation for a systematic plan for gifted

education within the country's public education system. According to Clause 1, Article 2 of the law, a gifted and talented person is defined as "an individual who requires special education to develop innate potential with an outstanding talent." Moreover, the government believes that "all members of a nation shall have the right to an education according to their ability and aptitude, to promote self-actualization and contribute to the development of society and nation" (Korean Educational Development Institute, 2011).

A "Master Plan" for the promotion of gifted education was jointly developed by various government entities in 2002 and was later readopted, with improvements, in 2008. Several programs were implemented under the "Master Plan." On the elementary and middle levels, gifted students chiefly participate in STEM related after-school or weekend programs, either in their own school or through joint participation with neighboring schools, universities, or government-funded research and public service institutions (Korean Educational Development Institute, 2011). Few gifted schools or full time gifted classes at this level exist; for fear that competition between families for spots would worsen an already high-stress environment for children. There is a much stronger emphasis on gifted education at the high school level than there is on the primary level and students annually cram to gain acceptance into these highly coveted full-time gifted programs. An overwhelming majority of gifted high schools focus on math and science; areas in which the country's students have performed particularly well on recent global achievement exams. The South Korean government values their highly able students and continues to increase the number and scope of available programs that will serve to nurture a wider range of talents.

Gifted Education in Singapore

Singapore is an island city-state located off southern Malaysia in Southeast Asia.

Singaporean students continuously outperform students from other nations on international achievement exams, with particularly promising data from students in the bottom socioeconomic status (SES) quartile (Finn & Wright, 2015). The education system, managed by the Ministry of Education, is divided into three levels, culminating with post-secondary school for those who qualify. Education is compulsory at the first two levels, as all students must attend 6 years of primary school and 4-5 years of secondary school. While the Ministry of Education is making efforts to move away from high-stakes testing, there are still several important exams, which largely determine students' educational fate (Singapore Ministry of Education, 2016).

Gifted education in Singapore begins in the middle of primary school and continues through post-secondary programs. The Ministry of Education's mission statement states that the country is "committed to nurturing gifted individuals to their full potential for the fulfillment of self and the betterment of society" and provides two rationales for the *Gifted Education Program* (GEP), titled "The Educational Factor" and "The Socio-Political Factor." The Ministry argues that children have varying abilities and deserve an education suited to their pace and needs. Moreover, according to the Singapore Ministry of Education, properly nurturing the gifted will help to ensure the small nation's progress and prosperity (Singapore Ministry of Education, 2016). Through its mission to provide educational excellence to gifted students, the Ministry also seeks to increase equity in the population of students in the GEP, and strategically does not begin testing until the end of third grade. The Ministry

believes in "leveling the playing field" for all students. That is, it argues that students from lower socioeconomic families will have an increased chance at performing better on gifted entrance exams after three years of primary school, as it recognizes that not all children have the same level of academic exposure prior to the start of formal schooling. Gifted testing is universally administered to third graders and consists of English proficiency, math, and "general ability" components. The top 8% of performers on this test sit for another round of testing two months later, and about 550 students receive GEP offers, which annually corresponds to about 1% of the student population. Students who accept offers are placed into one of the nine GEP centers throughout the country. The next top 4% of high performers are designated as "High Ability Learners" and all schools are encouraged to differentiate their curriculum to correspond to these students' aptitudes. Some schools take this charge very seriously, creating rigorous programs of their own for these students, while others do little to acknowledge these students' gifts and talents (Finn & Wright, 2015).

At the end of sixth grade, all students, including those in the GEP, take the highly competitive Primary School Leaving Exam (PSLE), which determines their secondary school placement. Students in the primary GEP are promoted to the secondary GEP based on exam results, academic performance, and teacher ratings (Finn & Wright, 2015). Students who remain in the GEP can attend one of the sixteen Integrated Program (IP) schools that offer a school-based gifted education program, which are six-year programs that allow students to proceed to junior college without taking entrance exams (Singapore Ministry of Education, 2016). The Singaporean government sees their gifted students as a national resource

in the political and economic stability of the nation.

Gifted Education in England

England is one of four countries that make up the United Kingdom (U.K.) and one of the three that make up Great Britain. The other countries are Scotland, Wales, and Ireland. Ireland is part of the United Kingdom, but not part of Great Britain.

England's focus on gifted education is to educate their most able children within the school system. Social class in the U.K. is akin to the debate about race in the United States, therefore, educating their brightest students is viewed with skepticism and as a form of segregation by social class. Their approach is to build on general education rather than placing gifted education outside of the general education structure (Eyre, 2004).

From World War II until the 1970s, England used a form of education known as the tripartite system of secondary schooling. At the end of primary school, students sat for an aptitude test and, based on the results of that test, were placed into one of three pathways; grammar schools, secondary modern schools, or technical-vocational schools. The first, grammar schools, emphasized preparation for university. Beginning in the 1960s, the government began phasing out the tripartite system, leaving only 164 grammar schools and 3,500 secondary schools. Today, most students attend comprehensive secondary schools much like the United States. Currently, no federal policy guides the education of gifted students in the primary and middle years. Schools in England have considerable latitude. English schools still have national tests, curriculum, and inspections but educating their brightest students is not a top priority for the government; and much like the United States, the implementation of differentiated curriculum, instructional, and

assessment approaches are idiosyncratic.

However, the Department for Children, Schools, and Families (2008) defines gifted learners as "Children and young people with one or more abilities developed to a level significantly ahead of their year group (or with the potential to develop those abilities," (pg. 31) and produced a guidance document for schools to use in developing effective practices in identifying and serving gifted and talented learners. Included in the guidance document are recommendations for including planning for provisions for gifted learners as schools implement the institutional quality standards (IQS), a process of self-review and planning.

There are advocacy efforts such as Potential Plus UK, which was established in 1967 as an independent charity that works with families to support children with high learning potential. The goal is to work with parents and caregivers, versus schools and teachers. Another advocacy organization is the National Association for Able Children in Education (NACE), whose membership is made up of teachers and schools. The organization specializes in supporting teachers to provide excellent teaching and learning for able, gifted and talented pupils.

Gifted Education in Finland

Finland is a Northern European Nordic country and is world-renowned for its educational excellence. In recent years, Finland has often been used as a model for countries seeking to increase their rankings on the worldwide stage. Although Finland's recent Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) scores have declined, students still continue to outperform many Organisation for Economic Development (OECD) countries, including ones that spend far more educating their students (Center on International Education Benchmarking, 2015).

The country's education system is rooted in equality: all children, regardless of background, should generally be educated the same, with a particular monetary focus on students who need the most help (Finn & Wright, 2015). Students are placed in classrooms with highly able and well-respected educators, who are given autonomy in their instruction. Students are only required to take one national exam (the matriculation exam at the end of secondary school) in the duration of their public school years. The Finnish National Board of Education (FNBE) explains:

The main objective of Finnish education policy is to offer all citizens equal opportunities to receive education. The structure of the education system reflects these principles. The system is highly permeable, that is, there are no dead-ends preventing progression to higher levels of education.

The focus in education is on learning rather than testing. There are no national tests for pupils in basic education in Finland. Instead, teachers are responsible for assessment in their respective subjects on the basis of the objectives included in the curriculum (Finnish National Board of Education, 2016).

Teachers, who hold Master's degrees or higher, are trusted to do what they believe is best for each individual student, but it is the general societal belief that no student should receive "more" or "better" than others.

The Finnish public school system begins with "basic education" at comprehensive schools (ages 7-16), with an optional one year of pre-primary education at age 6. Students can then elect to enroll in general upper secondary

schools or vocational schools for approximately 3 more years before entering universities or the workforce. Parents typically enroll their children in a comprehensive school in their own community, as it is widely believed that most schools, regardless of neighborhood, provide a great education. While the FNBE does not have a gifted education policy and seems to shy away from explicitly differentiating high-ability students from others, parents of "gifted" children sometimes seek out (or create) opportunities that will allow their children to be educated with likeminded children and their families. Parents sometimes band together to request specialized classes like Latin within their child's school or apply to one of their city's specialized arts or music schools (Finn & Wright, 2015). While not termed "gifted" programs, there are more opportunities for specialized instruction on the upper secondary level, as many schools have strict admissions policies:

The selection of students for upper secondary school is based on their grade point average for the theoretical subjects in the basic education certificate. Entrance and aptitude tests may also be used, and students may be awarded points for hobbies and other relevant activities (Finnish National Board of Education, 2016).

While gifted education is not a priority in Finland, it is clear that high-quality teaching is. In 2014, only 20% of those who participated in an entrance exam into teaching preparation programs at Finnish universities were admitted (Eurydice Network, 2014). Perhaps the most effective undertaking Finland has made is prioritizing the hiring of individuals who educate the country's students, and entrusting them to properly differentiate for all of their students.

The United States and the four other countries reviewed each are unique in their approaches toward the way they view and educate their brightest students. There is either a bend towards equity, educating *all* students; or towards recognizing excellence through specialized programming, funding, or mandates of its brightest students.

Implications for Policy and Practice

Based on a review of contexts in five countries, including public perception, mandates, and value systems about cultivating and sustaining programs for brightest learners, the following implications are important to consider.

- Gifted education remains a state and local control issue in the United States. Due to the vast number of diverse identification measures, programming, funding, and national reform efforts, achieving coherency of curricula, teacher preparation, program delivery, and accountability to provide for the academic and social-emotional needs of gifted students will be difficult, at best.
- When there are scarce resources for educational funding in the United States, and globally, conflicts occur over who should be educated. Where this is the case, gifted students are left out of the funding allocation and priorities. In other countries, such as Singapore and South Korea, that are more monolithic with less divisive demands for funding, gifted learners are included within the educational priorities, reform efforts, and guidance provided to schools.
- Gifted learners are an integral part of the overall student population in any country and therefore, should be thoughtfully and strategically considered part and parcel of any

educational efforts, initiatives, and priorities.

- Public perception and parent involvement serve as important vehicles in any country in serving its brightest learners. If the gifted student population is viewed as vital to human capital and thus national security, programming and funding follow. If serving gifted students is perceived as pulling resources away from the “neediest” students it is viewed as elitist.
- This is a relationship between a country’s international test comparisons of its brightest students and a country’s gross domestic product.
- Countries tend to use different lenses to determine the degree to which gifted students are served. For example, in Finland, teacher expertise is seen as fundamental to a strong educational system, thus an effective teacher can meet the academic and social emotional needs of their gifted student population. In South Korea and Singapore, investing in the brightest children is a way to ensure international competitiveness and cultivate human potential.

Conclusion

The values, traditions, cultures, and politics of countries shape the perception of equity and excellence. Unfortunately, the definition of excellence, which should be an objective and absolute standard toward which all students should strive and aspire, has given way to more subjective meanings laden with values and context. *Equity* in school curriculum, instruction, and assessment has become a belief in equality of outcomes and that all students, regardless of their ability levels should receive identical instruction. As Gallagher noted, in Yecke’s (2005) book, The War against

Excellence, “Efforts to offset economic and social barriers to cognitive development will succeed in equalizing academic aptitude only to a certain degree: Some students will still learn faster than others, even if the discrepancy between the most and least rapid learners is decreased,” (Yecke, 2005, pg. 170).

Attempts to meet the needs of gifted students in the United States, England, and Finland, have been largely thwarted, denied, or ignored due to an overriding philosophical bend toward *equity*. In every decade, champions for the gifted have introduced legislation, policies, research, and pedagogically sound practices in an effort to provide appropriate challenging educational experiences for these learners. Yet, excellence has given way to a definition of equity that has precluded the needs of the ablest learners in the school population. Excellence should not be perceived as a group norm; rather, it should be viewed as an individual quest for higher learning seen as in countries such as Singapore and South Korea. Competition is a necessary component in society’s idea of success, but social activists fail to see this when it comes to gifted and talented students. True educational equity cannot disallow opportunities to pursue excellence at appropriate ability levels, areas, and interests for the individual learner. Concerns over elitism continue to plague

educators globally seeking to provide appropriate services for gifted students and to respond to criticisms of those services (Spielhagen & Cooper, 2005).

Will there ever be a time when the United States can embrace all learners, including those who learn content more quickly, understand concepts more deeply, and process information in a more advanced manner? Will the United States ever consider replicating elements of other countries programs for gifted students and implementing it within its borders? Because the system of education in the United States has largely been relegated to state and local control, programs for the gifted are embedded in school system decisions surrounding curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Even when there are national reform efforts that affect all students, such as Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA, 2015), gifted students are (perhaps unintentionally) left out. Educational provisions for the gifted are an integral part of the overall school program, but reform efforts conceptually do not translate to implementing better programs for the gifted (Spielhagen, Brown & Hughes, 2014). When will equitable experiences founded on excellence in research, excellence in practice, excellence in policy, and excellence in funding be employed for all learners, here and abroad?

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